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Arizona Department of Education  
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal

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**For Immediate Release**

February 29, 2012

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## **Arizona Submits Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Waiver Application to US Department of Education**

***State Takes Important Step Toward Substantially Increasing the Quality of Instruction; Improving Student Achievement; and Ensuring All High School Graduates Are College- and Career-Ready***

**Phoenix, AZ, Wednesday, February 29, 2012** – Today, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) announced that it had submitted its application for flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to the US Department of Education yesterday.

“For several years, Arizona has been aggressively pursuing an education reform agenda based on the very best science in order to improve student outcomes and teacher instruction,” said Superintendent of Public Instruction John Huppenthal. “Many of these education efforts align with requirements outlined by the US Department of Education. That, coupled with the greater freedom Arizona would receive to implement these reforms, is why I decided to pursue flexibility from a federal accountability structure that is both burdensome and lacking in scientific foundation.”

“I applaud Superintendent Huppenthal for seeking this waiver, and will continue to champion innovation, efficiency and accountability in education,” said Governor Jan Brewer. “Receipt of this waiver will grant Arizona the flexibility necessary to help ensure that regulations and bureaucracy don’t stand in the way of student achievement.”

With Congress failing to reauthorize ESEA last year, on September 23, 2011, President Obama announced that the US Department of Education would be formally inviting states to apply for "ESEA flexibility" (waivers) in exchange for state leadership in meeting the following four key principles:

1. Adopt and implement college- and career-ready standards and aligned assessments.
2. Develop and implement a system of differentiated recognition, accountability, and support.
3. Develop and implement a system of teacher and principal evaluations.
4. Evaluate and revise, as necessary, a state education agency’s own administrative requirements to reduce duplication and unnecessary burden on local education agencies (school districts and charter schools).

“I’m very pleased with the flexibility waiver application put forward by Superintendent Huppenthal,” said Jaime Molera, President of the State Board of Education. “Once approved this waiver will grant Arizona the flexibility necessary to minimize duplicative and burdensome federal requirements, and allow the K-12 community to place greater emphasis on the needs of individual students.”

The ESEA flexibility sought benefits Arizona's public education system in key ways, including the following:

- Moves Arizona toward *one* school accountability system (A-F school letter grades) rather than two. One system communicates a clear, consistent message to parents, teachers, administrators and other important stakeholders on Arizona schools' academic performance.
- Provides Arizona's schools, districts and charters with the flexibility they need to allocate limited resources to best meet the unique needs of their diverse student populations.
- Helps facilitate the ongoing reform of the Arizona Department of Education from a compliance bureaucracy into an education support center that streamlines duplicative processes, increases transparency and provides world-class service to all of its education stakeholders.

"Our member school boards statewide have been working with administrative leaders, teachers and community members to implement systems and tools that will raise the bar for accountability and student achievement," said Dr. Tim Ogle, executive director of the Arizona School Boards Association. "The ESEA waiver will further our progress by providing the flexibility schools need to effectively continue this work and remove unnecessary or counterproductive federal mandates that hinder our goals of increasing student achievement."

"NCLB waivers are a natural fit with the direction our state is going," explained Littleton Elementary School District Superintendent Dr. Roger Freeman. "The potential for using growth modeling to improve education is far greater than the AYP status snapshots currently used under the federal system."

For more information on Arizona's application for ESEA flexibility please visit: [www.azed.gov/eseawaiver](http://www.azed.gov/eseawaiver)

*As Superintendent of Public Instruction, John Huppenthal has oversight responsibility for Arizona's public school system which includes over 1 million students being educated by over 70,000 teachers and administrators in over 1,900 schools. During his 26 years in public service, he has established himself as one of Arizona's leading education reformers. As a state legislator, he successfully authored and passed over 200 bills, more bills than any other legislator in state history.*

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